



Saguaro National Park News Release

11-10

For Immediate Release

January 18, 2011

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Beat Back Buffelgrass Day

Volunteers Needed for Buffelgrass Removal from Public Lands – Saturday, February 5th

Tucson, AZ – Buffelgrass is a wildfire waiting to happen. Buffelgrass invasion is threatening to transform the mostly fireproof and diverse Sonoran Desert into a flammable and impoverished savanna, affecting both natural and urban areas. On February 5th, hundreds of volunteers will join the fight against this growing environmental problem.

As Sarah Smallhouse, Chair of the Board of Directors of the non-profit Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center, said, “When I was growing up and in school, deforestation and the loss of biodiversity in the rain forest became a major environmental concern. Little did I know that our own desert could face the same threat.”

Listed as a noxious weed in Arizona, buffelgrass is flammable most of the year, and burns much hotter than native grasses and plants. The native vegetation, unaccustomed to fire, is permanently destroyed while the buffelgrass recovers quickly. As buffelgrass colonizes more areas, native plants and animals are displaced and the threat of fire increases across the landscape.

We cannot let this invasive grass destroy our unique environment and quality of life. Together we can reduce the threat and save the Sonoran Desert for future generations.

Last year on Beat Back Buffelgrass Day, over 500 volunteers removed more than 15,000 buffelgrass plants from 20 locations in just a few hours. This year, with the help of the University of Arizona Softball Team and Coach Mike Candrea, we are hoping to attract more than a thousand volunteers. Please join Coach Candrea, the LadyCats and your neighbors in this community-wide event to engage the general public.

Individuals and groups can volunteer at more than two dozen locations in and around Tucson by registering at www.buffelgrass.org. Saguaro National Park will host a Beat Back Buffelgrass event at the Park's Tucson Mountain District (Saguaro West). Additional information on buffelgrass can be found at the Saguaro National Park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/sagu/naturescience/invasive-plants.htm>.

www.nps.gov

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